IN THE CLAIMS

1.   (currently amended) A program distribution system comprising:

a receiver; and

a transmitter including a distribution controller;

said receiver being operable to accept a user request for a desired program, the user request being in a free style text format, to convert the user request into a distribution request e-mail message that includes the user request and that is addressed to said distribution controller of said transmitter, and to send the distribution request e-mail message to said transmitter;

said transmitter including:

a distributable program storing unit operable to store a plurality of distributable programs,

said distribution controller being operable to receive the distribution request e-mail message addressed to said distribution controller, to determine whether the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs, to transmit an answer e-mail message to said receiver in response to the distribution request e-mail message, the answer e-mail message including a notice of correspondence and including supplemental information when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs, the supplemental information including cryptanalytic information for decrypting the program, and to read out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs, and

a distributor operable to distribute the requested program to said receiver.

2.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said distributable program storing unit is further operable to store an associated title for each of the plurality of distributable programs, and

said distribution controller is further operable to compare each word of the user request with each of the stored titles and to read out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when the user request includes a title associated with one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

3.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said receiver is further operable to include a predetermined term in a subject field in the distribution request e-mail message, the predetermined term indicating that the distribution request e-mail message includes the user request.

4.-5.   (cancelled)

6.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 2, wherein the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence when the user request includes a title associated with one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

7.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 1, wherein said receiver is further operable to transmit a confirmation e-mail message to said distribution controller in response to the answer e-mail message when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of said receiver has agreed to purchase the requested program, said distribution controller reading out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when said distribution controller receives the confirmation e-mail message.

8.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 6, wherein said receiver is further operable to transmit a confirmation e-mail message to said distribution controller in response to the answer e-mail message when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of said receiver has agreed to purchase the requested program, said distribution controller reading out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when said distribution controller receives the confirmation e-mail message.

9.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 1, further comprising a recorder connected to said receiver, and wherein the supplemental information includes a control command for causing said recorder to record the requested program.

10.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 6, further comprising a recorder connected to said receiver, and wherein the supplemental information includes a control command for causing said recorder to record the requested program.

11.   (previously presented) A method of distributing programs, said method comprising:

receiving, at a transmitter, a distribution request e-mail message from a receiver, the distribution request e-mail message being addressed to a distribution controller of the transmitter and including a user request for a desired program, the user request being in a free style text format;

determining whether the requested program is one of a stored plurality of distributable programs;

transmitting an answer e-mail message to the receiver in response to the distribution request e-mail

message, the answer e-mail message including a notice of correspondence and including supplemental information when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs, the supplemental information including cryptanalytic information for decrypting the program;

reading out the requested program when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs; and

distributing the requested program to the receiver.

12. (previously presented) The method according to claim 11, wherein an associated title is stored for each of the plurality of distributable programs, and said determining step includes comparing each word of the user request with each of the stored titles, and said reading out step reads out the requested program when the user request includes a title associated with one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

13. (previously presented) The method according to claim 11, wherein the distribution request e-mail message includes a predetermined term in a subject field, the predetermined term indicating that the distribution request e-mail message includes the user request.

14.-15. (cancelled)

16. (previously presented) The method according to claim 12, wherein the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence when the user request includes a title associated with one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

17. (previously presented) The method according to claim 11, further comprising receiving a confirmation e-mail message from the receiver in response to the answer e-mail

message when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of the receiver has agreed to purchase the requested program, and wherein said reading step and said distributing step are carried out only when the confirmation e-mail message is received.

18. (previously presented) The method according to claim 16, further comprising receiving a confirmation e-mail message from the receiver in response to the answer e-mail message when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of the receiver has agreed to purchase the requested program, and wherein said reading and said distributing step are carried out only when the confirmation e-mail message is received.

19. (previously presented) The method according to claim 11, wherein the supplemental information includes a control command for causing a recorder connected to the receiver to record the requested program.

20. (previously presented) The method according to claim 16, wherein the supplemental information includes a control command to cause a recorder connected to the receiver to record the requested program.

21. (previously presented) A transmitter, comprising:

a distributable program storing unit operable to store a plurality of distributable programs;

a distribution controller operable to receive a distribution request e-mail message addressed to said distribution controller from a receiver, the distribution request e-mail message including a user request for a desired program, the user request being in a free style text format, to determine whether the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs, to

transmit an answer e-mail message to the receiver in response to the distribution request e-mail message, the answer e-mail message including a notice of correspondence and including supplemental information when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs, the supplemental information including cryptanalytic information for decrypting the program, and to read out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs; and

a distributor operable to distribute the requested program to the receiver.

22. (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 21, wherein said distributable program storing unit is further operable to store an associated title for each of the plurality of distributable programs, and said distribution controller is further operable to compare each word of the user request with each of the stored titles and to read out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when the user request includes a title associated with one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

23. (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 21, wherein the distribution request e-mail message includes a predetermined term in a subject field, the predetermined term indicating that the distribution request e-mail message includes the user request.

24.-25. (cancelled)

26. (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 22, wherein the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence when the user request includes a title associated with one of the stored plurality of distributable programs.

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27. (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 21, wherein said distribution controller reads out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when said distribution controller receives a confirmation e-mail message that is sent by the receiver in response to the answer e-mail message when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of the receiver has agreed to purchase the selected program.

28. (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 26, wherein said distribution controller reads out the requested program from said distributable program storing unit when said distributable controller receives a confirmation e-mail message that is sent by the receiver in response to the answer e-mail message when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of the receiver has agreed to purchase the requested program.

29. (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 21, wherein the supplemental information includes a control command for causing a recorder connected to the receiver to record the requested program.

30. (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 26, wherein the supplemental information includes a control command for causing a recorder connected to the receiver to record the requested program.

31. (previously presented) A receiver, comprising:

a controller operable to accept a user request for a desired program, the user request being in a free style text format, to convert the user request into a distribution request e-mail message that includes the user request and that is addressed to a distribution controller of a predetermined distribution unit, and to send the

distribution request e-mail message to the predetermined distribution unit; and

a front end operable to receive an answer e-mail message sent by the predetermined distribution unit in response to the distribution request e-mail message, the answer e-mail message including a notice of correspondence and including supplemental information when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs, the supplemental information including cryptanalytic information for decrypting the program, and to receive the requested program from the predetermined distribution unit when the requested program is available from the predetermined distribution unit.

32. (previously presented) The receiver according to claim 31, wherein said controller is further operable to include a predetermined term in a subject field in the distribution request e-mail message, the predetermined term indicating that the distribution request e-mail message includes the user request.

33.-34. (cancelled)

35. (previously presented) The receiver according to claim 31, wherein said controller is further operable to transmit a confirmation e-mail message to the predetermined distribution unit when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user of said receiver has agreed to purchase the requested program.

36. (previously presented) The receiver according to claim 31, wherein the supplemental information includes a control command for causing a recorder connected to said receiver to record the requested program.

37. (previously presented) A method of receiving programs, said method comprising:

accepting a user request for a desired program, the user request being in a free style text format;

converting the user request into a distribution request e-mail message that includes the user request and that is addressed to a distribution controller of a predefined distribution unit;

sending the distribution request e-mail message to the predetermined distribution unit;

receiving an answer e-mail message from the predetermined distribution unit in response to the distribution request e-mail message, the answer e-mail message including a notice of correspondence and including supplemental information when the requested program is one of the stored plurality of distributable programs, the supplemental information including cryptanalytic information for decrypting the program; and

receiving the requested program from the predetermined distribution unit when the requested program is available from the predetermined distribution unit.

38. (previously presented) The method according to claim 37, wherein the distribution request e-mail message includes a predetermined term in a subject field, the predetermined term indicating that the distribution request e-mail message includes the user request.

39. (cancelled)

40. (previously presented) The method according to claim 37, further comprising transmitting a confirmation e-mail message to the predetermined distribution unit when the answer e-mail message includes the notice of correspondence, the confirmation e-mail message indicating that the user has agreed to purchase the requested program.

41. (previously presented) The method according to claim 37, wherein the supplemental information includes a

control command for causing a recorder record the received program.

42.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 9, wherein the supplemental information includes accounting information for the program.

43.   (previously presented) The program distribution system according to claim 10, wherein the supplemental information includes accounting information for the program.

44.   (previously presented) The method according to claim 19, wherein the supplemental information includes accounting information for the program.

45.   (previously presented) The method according to claim 20, wherein the supplemental information includes accounting information for the program.

46.   (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 29, wherein the supplemental information includes accounting information for the program.

47.   (previously presented) The transmitter according to claim 30, wherein the supplemental information includes accounting information for the program.

48.   (previously presented) The receiver according to claim 36, wherein the supplemental information includes accounting information for the program.

49.   (previously presented) The method according to claim 41, wherein the supplemental information includes accounting information for the program.